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ABSTRACT

Adolescent women have been a part of gangs in the United States since the early 1800s, but they have been neglected in gang research. To address the shortfall, this study used structured interviews, standardized questionnaires, and collaborative records to gather information about adolescent women in a metropolitan area with an emerging gang problem. This research focuses on characteristics of adolescent females that may relate to their involvement with gangs. It examines existing data pertaining to females and gangs, and then explores various theories regarding who these young women are. The study focused on such areas as family demographics and family relationships; school and community functioning; psycho-social functioning; and level of contact with gangs and gang behavior. To further understanding, researchers compared two not-gang-involved groups of females to a third group of gang-involved women. It was found that the mothers of gang-involved adolescent women had significantly lower education levels than mothers in the comparison groups. Gang-involved adolescent women reported feeling mistreated at home significantly more often than other females and expressed problematic relationships with fathers. Friendship patterns and social-structural considerations were also connected to gang membership. (RJM)

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GANG-INVOLVED AND OTHER ADOLESCENT WOMEN

Sandra Rodden Shulmire

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ABSTRACT

This study used structured interviews, standardized questionnaires, and collaborative records to gather information about adolescent women in a metropolitan area with an emerging gang problem. Several variables were identified which could differentiate gang-involved adolescent women from other groups of adolescent women, and these were used to develop a **"Gang Involvement Risk Index."** Significant variables included: low education level of mother; poor relationship with father, or absent father; perception of mistreatment at home; lack of sense of efficacy; low self-esteem; and having friends who are gang members. Implications for future research are discussed.

Some researchers are seeing sharp increases in gang activity in some cities (Curry & Spergel, 1988; Hagedorn,1988). There is also data available on gangs in public schools for some cities (Prophet, 1990). Spergel (1984) estimated that there were fifty-three male and seven female gangs in sixty public high schools in Chicago. With the increase in gang activity there has been a renewed interest in research about gangs. Adolescent women have been a part of gangs in our country since the early 1800's but have been grossly neglected in the research and writing. Although male gang members are estimated to outnumber females by twenty to one, more than half of the youth or street gangs have female auxiliaries or affiliates. In addition, some gangs are mixed gender, and some female gangs are unaffiliated or independent. According to Stephens (1993), it is a myth that females are not allowed to join gangs. They are, in fact, joining gangs in record numbers and are often extremely violent. Females used to be regarded as "mules" - transporters of guns or drugs, but now participate fully in the criminal activities, including fighting, stabbing, shooting, and selling drugs. According to Huff (1993), a new trend appears to be developing on the east and west coasts toward truly autonomous female gangs, a trend he attributes to the greater autonomy for females in our society in general resulting from the feminist movement.

Some of the early studies which referred to females based their conclusions on data supplied by male gang members to male researchers and interpreted by male academicians (Klein, 1971; Miller, 1982). This early research tended to view female gang members only in terms of their interpersonal and structural relationships to male gang members. Young women were seen as either sex objects whose purpose was to have sexual relationships with the males, or as tomboys who were too masculine and undesirable for sexual relationships. The role of women as girlfriends of and "property" of male gang members continues to exist in today's gangs. Young women are seen by researchers as both the cause and the cure of male delinquency because of the violence they might promote both directly and indirectly, and because they are often able to persuade males to leave a gang or to limit the type of criminal activity in which they engage (Klein & Maxon, 1989; Jankowski, 1991). Young women who engage in gang behaviors and criminal activity separately from the males have been classified as "tomboys," "entrepreneurs," and "independents." Research to date presents different, and often conflicting views of these "entrepreneurial" young women and fails to accurately characterize them, or differentiate them from the traditional female gang member in terms of background or motivation.

Researchers who focused specifically on women include Shover, Norland, James, and Thornton (1979) who compared Masculinity Theory with Opportunity and Controls Theory. They looked at belief systems about traditional roles, gender role expectations, attachments to significant others, and opportunities available. Data collected were somewhat inconclusive as pertained to particular theories of causation, but the authors proposed that changes in traditional gender roles may result in increasing rates of female involvement in both property and aggressive crimes.

Rafter and Stanko (1982) looked at women involved in the justice system both as victims and offenders and addressed the changing roles of women criminals. Parisi (1982) saw female criminals as separate and different from the males. Warren (1982) analyzed data regarding delinquency causation in female offenders and determined that social control theory was most applicable. This theory implies that the deterioration of social institutions such as home and church has contributed to the increase in crime. Recent research suggests that a causal relationship exists between commitment to school measured by involvement in school activities and lack of delinquent activity (Downs & Rose, 1991). According to these authors, when social institutions are strong and provide direction and opportunity for involvement of a legitimate nature, women will be less likely to engage in criminal activity.

Bowker, Gross and Klein (1980) determined that females were systematically excluded from the planning and action phases of delinquent activities, and that female presence had a suppressing effect on such activities. Females would encounter even more difficulty trying to become part of existing organized crime structures than they would trying to access employment, social, or educational structures.

Bowker and Klein (1983) also explored psychological and social-structural explanations for female juvenile delinquency and concluded that social-structural factors had such an impact in determining delinquent behavior that psychological explanations were hardly necessary. Some early researchers suggested that females who participated in gangs were unattractive and socially maladjusted. Others suggested that participation in delinquent activities was related to friendship patterns and other social-structural considerations like socioeconomic status and opportunity (Miller, 1975). Horowitz (1983) discussed female gangs as affiliates of male gangs and primarily as a social support group, although she reported that the young women would sometimes behave in "unfeminine" ways if they felt they needed to fight for their honor. Most recently, Horowitz (1990) addressed the lack of sufficient and adequate research on females in gangs.

Campbell (1984) has contributed a thorough review of the history of female gang participation. Her recent research which focuses mainly on Latino women and gangs describes the following context from which female gang members may emerge: " a future of meaningless domestic labor as a housewife with little possibility of educational or occupational escape; subordination to the man in the house; responsibility for children; the social isolation of the housewife; the powerlessness of underclass membership," (Campbell, 1990). She suggests that adolescent women seek to postpone such a future by becoming part of a gang which provides support, a sense of belonging and identity, and some opportunities to engage in "wild and crazy" behavior.

Harris (1988) sees Latino adolescent women as seeking out a culture of their own which fulfills their need for support and belonging, and builds identity through motifs and symbols. Loyalty is to the gang, their new reference group, rather than to family, church, or school.

Taylor (1990) suggested that adolescent women's motivations for joining gangs are to gain respect, acquire money and material goods, and be independent of the male gang members. He refers to these women as "entrepreneurs."

Kroupa (1988) concluded that the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, specifically parental acceptance or lack of it, seemed to be a significant factor in female juvenile delinquency. Reid and Patterson (1989) have done extensive research on parent-child interactions, particularly, coercive parent-child interactions. They suggest that such interactions established early and coupled with poor bonding within the family often result in conduct problems. Horne (1993) further concludes that a combination of temperament, coercive parent-child interaction, poor bonding, subsequent problem behavior, inadequate social competence, academic failure, and peer rejection frequently leads a child with antisocial behaviors to develop a commitment to a deviant peer group such as a gang.

It has been the impression of school personnel and researchers for some time that underachievers are especially susceptible to gang involvement since they lack the skills to access legitimate opportunity systems. Kodluboy and Evenrud (1993) suggest that, although not every instance of school-based gang-related behavior will represent an educational disability or an educationally relevant social-emotional disorder, some will, and should be considered for possible assessment and intervention specific to those educational issues. Downs and Rose (1991) identified a type of peer group whose students had: minimal involvement in school activities, high

use of drugs and alcohol, high rates of delinquent behaviors, low self-esteem, depression, and high external locus of control.

Poor self-esteem has often been linked to gang involvement. It has often been linked with depression, high external locus of control or lack of self-efficacy, and problem behaviors, including poor school performance and delinquency. Bowker and Klein (1983) suggested that low self-esteem resulted from gang participation instead of causing it. Mullis, Mullis, and Normandin (1992) found that self-esteem fluctuates in adolescent women over time and may reflect life and school transitions, making it difficult to establish a connection between self-esteem and gang participation.

Self-efficacy has been defined by Bandura (1977, 1986) as an individual's judgment about how well she/he will be able to produce and regulate life events. A number of studies have suggested that delinquents tend toward external control, and that violent offenders tend toward greater external control than those who are nonviolent (Hollin, 1993). Recent research involving adolescents has explored the relationship between self-efficacy and affective states, including depression, and found that low perceived self-efficacy was associated with depression and poor school performance (Ehrenberg, Cox, & Koopman, 1991; Downs & Rose, 1991).

This study focuses on characteristics of adolescent females which may relate to their involvement with gangs. The study first examined existing data pertaining to females and gangs, and then explored various theories regarding who these young women are, what they are like, and what their roles may be with regard to gangs. Next, data was gathered about adolescent women in a metropolitan area with an emerging gang problem. Attention was given to the following areas: family demographics and family relationships; school and community functioning; psycho-social functioning; and level of contact with gangs and gang behavior. Data was compared across three groups to test several hypotheses. Results are presented and analyzed with a discussion of possible interventions and strategies for addressing the problems. The following hypotheses were derived from a critical review of the literature:

1. No significant relationship exists between family demographics and gang involvement for adolescent women.
2. A significant relationship exists between the quality of family relationships as perceived by adolescent women, and their involvement in gangs.
3. There is a significant relationship between school achievement and involvement of adolescent women in gangs.
4. There is a significant relationship between participation of adolescent women in community activities and involvement in gangs.
5. There is a significant relationship between efficacy and self-esteem, and involvement of adolescent women in gangs. A significant relationship exists between these factors and the extent of involvement in gang behaviors.
6. Two or more of the variables examined will be found to be significant risk factors; i.e., when combined, the variables will show an interaction effect for adolescent women in the direction of involvement with gangs.

METHOD

Instruments

Instruments consisted of: 1) A structured interview. This instrument contained 60 items that surveyed the following four categories: demographic and family data; school functioning and community involvement; psycho-social functioning; level of contact with gangs and opinions about gang membership. 2) Two measures of psycho-social attitudes were selected. These were the "Self-Esteem Scale" (Rosenberg, 1965), and the "Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale for Children" (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973), which were selected because reliability and validity are well established, they are well standardized, content was relevant to this research, and they are short and readable.

Subjects

Subjects were selected based upon their meeting the following criteria: 1) Adolescent females, 13-18 years of age were identified by a large metropolitan juvenile justice department gang resources intervention team, as having been adjudicated for criminal behavior and participating in gang behavior and gang activities. 2) Adolescent females, 13-18 years of age, believed to be at risk for becoming involved in gang activities and gang behaviors were identified by three community programs: The Urban League; an alternative school for delinquent females; and Self-Enhancement, Incorporated, a privately developed program for at-risk youth. 3) Adolescent females, 13-18 years of age, with no record in the community of gang involvement, who are enrolled in a large metropolitan school district.

Procedures

Subjects were selected from the lists provided by the above agencies. Self-selection was a factor with all three groups, in the first two because of the groups' criteria, and in all three because of the voluntary nature of the participation. An attempt was made to match the groups by demographic variables as much as possible. Age and school attendance appeared to be fairly well matched across groups but ethnicity was problematic. In the second group, there was a predominance of African-American women because they are the focus of two of the community programs for at-risk young women. There were no other programs found in the community whose focus included women at risk for gang involvement. In the first and third groups of subjects the following ethnic groups were represented: Asian, African-American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Native American Indian.

Agencies which participated in this research were initially contacted by telephone and a follow up letter was sent which included a description of the proposed research and details regarding the informed consent procedures. Within-agency procedures differed but once approval was granted and potential subjects identified, contact was made both by telephone and letter. Parents/ guardians and subjects were sent a brief description of the proposed study and informed consent procedures as well as a form with which to acknowledge awareness of the procedures and grant permission for the subject to participate. The informed consent procedures were discussed with the subjects again at the time of their participation in the research. Interviews were conducted and test instruments administered to the subjects at the following locations: 1) gang resources intervention team field office; 2) juvenile detention hall; 3) alternative school for delinquent females; 4) several middle and high schools; 5) state women's correctional facility. A debriefing procedure was included as part of the interview process because of the emotional aspects of the issues discussed and because many of the subjects were quite revealing about their relationships with gangs as well as about family matters.

Collateral information including attendance information, grades, cumulative grade point average, standardized reading and math scores, behavioral and Special Education records was gathered from court, school, and agency records and analyzed together with data from the structured interviews and results of the standardized assessments.

RESULTS

Analysis of variance was used to first identify which variables differentiated among the three groups of subjects. Next, planned group comparisons were done for each variable using analysis of variance. Results of these analyses can be seen in Tables 1 - 8 and are being presented and interpreted according to the hypotheses examined.

Insert Table 1

Family Demographics

Although no family demographic variables were expected to relate to gang involvement, Table 1 indicates that level of education attained by mothers was found to be significantly different between the three groups of women, $F(2,54) = 15.108$, $p < .001$. As shown in Table 2, mother's education level differentiates between gang-involved ($M = 1.706$) and not-gang involved adolescent women ($M = 2.684$), as well as gang-involved ($M = 1.706$) and at-risk adolescent women ($M = 2.778$). Most mothers of gang-involved adolescent women had not completed high school, as compared to the mothers of the at-risk and not-gang-involved adolescent women who had completed high school. Level of education attained by fathers was also found to differentiate between gang-involved ($M = 1.824$) and not-gang-involved adolescent women ($M = 2.500$), but not between the gang-involved ($M = 1.824$) and at-risk adolescent women ($M = 2.273$).

Insert Table 2

Family Relationships

As expected, there was a significant relationship between quality of family relationships as perceived by adolescent women, and their involvement in gangs, $F(2,60) = 17.157$, $p < .001$. Tables 1 and 3 show that in response to global questions about their subjective perceptions about how they are treated at home, gang-involved adolescent women were much more likely to feel mistreated at home than at-risk or not-gang-involved adolescent women. A perceived negative relationship between adolescent women and their fathers, or the absence of fathers significantly differentiated between both gang-involved adolescent women ($M = 2.533$) and at-risk adolescent women ($M = 2.857$), and not-gang-involved adolescent women ($M = 3.923$). Significantly more gang-involved women reported negative relationships with fathers than did adolescent women in the other groups. More than half of the at-risk adolescent women reported absent fathers. Not-gang-involved women most often reported positive relationships with fathers.

Insert Table 3

School Achievement

School achievement was expected to relate to involvement of adolescent women in gangs but, as seen in Table 4, variables analyzed differentiated between not-gang-involved adolescent women and the other groups, but did not differentiate between gang-involved and other at-risk adolescent women. Table 1 indicates that three variables were able to distinguish both gang-involved and at-risk adolescent women from not-gang-involved women. Grade point average was significantly higher for not-gang-involved adolescent women ($M = 2.976$) than for the other two groups which did not differ significantly from each other ($M = 1.925$, $M = 2.053$). Reading scores were highest for not-gang-involved adolescent women ($M = 231.471$), with gang-involved women the next highest ($M = 222.200$), and at-risk women the lowest ($M = 214.700$). Math scores were also

highest for not-gang-involved women (M = 239.688), next highest for the gang-involved women (M = 224.200), and lowest for the at-risk women (M = 217.300).

Insert Table 4

School Risk

In addition to variables related to school achievement, variables related to school risk were identified during this study and analyzed for their relationship to gang involvement. Several are shown in Table 1 to differentiate between the groups: number of schools attended, $F(2,56) = 3.479$, $p < .05$; number of behavior referrals, $F(2,40) = 4.055$, $p < .05$; and participation in Chapter 1, a remedial reading and math program, $F(2,60) = 3.704$, $p < .05$. Gang-involved adolescent women (M = 6.056) attended more schools than the women in the other two groups (M = 4.850, M = 4.222). Gang-involved adolescent women (M = 4.500) and at-risk women (M = 3.500) received more behavior referrals than not-gang-involved women (M = .000). At-risk adolescent women were more likely than the women in the other groups to have participated in Chapter 1 remedial education services . An additional variable, participation in an alternative education program, distinguished between gang-involved and both at-risk and not-gang-involved adolescent women, but such participation occurred after gang involvement began and could not be interpreted as a predictive factor in gang-involvement.

Insert Table 5

Community Activities

It was expected that involvement in community activities would differentiate gang-involved adolescent women from other groups, and Table 6 shows that gang-involved adolescent women (M = .400) were significantly less likely to participate in community activities than were not-gang-involved women (M = .950).

Insert Table 6

Efficacy and Self Esteem

It was expected that a relationship would exist between efficacy and self-esteem and involvement of adolescent women in gangs. Table 1 indicates that these variables do significantly differentiate between gang-involved and other groups of adolescent women, $F(2,60) = 8.049$, $p < .001$. Scores on a measure of self-efficacy were significantly lower for gang-involved adolescent women (M = 11.300) than for at-risk (M = 12.400) and not-gang-involved women (M =15.400), as seen in Table 7. Scores on a measure of low self-esteem were higher for gang-involved adolescent women (M = 20.300) than for either at-risk (M =17.400) or not-gang-involved adolescent women (M =16.700), but did not differ significantly between at-risk and not-gang-involved adolescent women. Extent of involvement in gang behaviors was not possible to measure in this study so comparisons were not made between efficacy, self-esteem and extent of involvement.

Insert Table 7

Gang Contact

Extent of contact with gang members was examined and several variables emerged which differentiated between gang-involved adolescent women and other groups of adolescent women. Table 1 shows that friendship with gang members significantly differentiated between the three groups, $F(2,60) = 11.075$, $p<.001$. Gang-involved adolescent women ($M = 1.000$) reported more friendships with gang members than both at-risk ($M = 1.350$) and not-gang-involved adolescent women ($M = 1.600$). Whether they had actually been recruited to join a gang also showed a significant difference between groups, $F(2,60) = 12.959$, $p<.001$. Both gang-involved and at-risk adolescent women reported knowing gang members and having gang members in their families at a greater rate than not-gang-involved women, as seen in Table 8.

Insert Table 8

Gang Involvement Risk Index

After reviewing the literature, it was hypothesized that several of the variables examined would be significant risk factors for gang involvement. Table 9 depicts a "Gang Involvement Risk Index" which is comprised of the six variables of the thirty-four examined which were found to most significantly differentiate between gang-involved adolescent women and the two groups of not-gang-involved adolescent women. The index was developed from the research data in order to provide a tool for future researchers who will study adolescent women considered at risk for gang involvement. By using this index, it should be possible to distinguish young women who may be at risk specifically for gang involvement from other young women, including young women who may meet other "at-risk" criteria.

Insert Table 9

DISCUSSION

In this study, two not-gang-involved groups of adolescent women were matched with and compared to a third group of gang-involved young women in order to examine six hypotheses. Although no specific demographic variables were expected to differentiate between gang-involved adolescent women and other groups, it was found that the mothers of gang-involved adolescent women had significantly lower educational levels than the mothers of adolescent women in the comparison groups. Most of the mothers of the gang-involved women had not graduated from high school. For many of these women who have left school without graduating, self-esteem may be low and their sense of efficacy limited, impairing their ability to be a strong role model for their children. Women with less education are usually disadvantaged in the employment market and contribute less to family income. They may work longer hours and have less time to spend with children. Stress and depression may exist for these women. They may have fewer options for providing good child care for their children. Given this finding, it seems important to consider the educational levels of parents, especially mothers, and how they interact with the developmental process as a risk factor for adolescent women. Treatment programs may need to address this issue by assessing the risk factors existing for parents, and then providing opportunities to reduce those risks. The young women in this study who are considered to be at risk may not become involved in gangs, but if they do not finish high school, their own daughters may be at risk for gang involvement.

The present study examined adolescent women's perceptions about relationships with parents. Data indicated that gang-involved adolescent women reported feeling mistreated at home significantly more often than did other young women. They also reported problematic relationships with fathers significantly more often. The latter was an interesting finding, given that there were more fathers still in the home for this group than for the other two groups of adolescent women. In many cases, these young women were living in single-parent homes with a custodial father, or had lived for a time with one parent and then the other. Both of these findings seem to concur with the work of Reid and Patterson (1989) and Horne (1993) who have done extensive research on coercive parent-child interactions and poor bonding within the family. Without a more in depth examination of the family dynamics, and an assessment of the fathers' risk factors, it is difficult to know exactly why these data emerged so significantly. One factor which appeared in the collaborative data was the high rate of substance abuse by the parents of these gang-involved women. Such a factor could seriously compromise the family system, and in fact, resulted in early substance use and abuse by the young women in the gang-involved group. Single-parent families often experience financial hardships which can contribute to stresses and strains on the family members. There may also be psychological factors related to these factors and to failed marriages which impact parent-daughter relationships. Anger and depression could contribute to neglect, abuse, and coercive or hostile relationships. There could also be role confusions or reversals, with young women assuming atypical roles in their families, and with resulting power struggles. Many young women have borne the responsibility of caring for the home and younger siblings for a time in an adult-like role, and then been placed in a situation in which they are expected to behave like a child again. Some of these young women may seek opportunities outside the home in which to once again feel capable and important. According to the present study, these opportunities may include gang involvement. In light of the current study, it seems appropriate to consider the dynamics of parent-daughter interactions and to develop programs and interventions which can improve the nature and quality of those interactions. Parents may need assistance in order to fulfill their parental roles with regard to their daughters. Young women need permission and support to remain in their daughter roles, so they can pursue their education and other activities appropriate to their age.

Results of the current study indicate that poor school achievement and academic deficits are common to both "at-risk" and gang-involved adolescent women. However, a review of school records indicated that gang-involved adolescent women did not differ from other adolescent women in terms of GPA or test scores until

after they had become involved in gang behaviors. At that point in their histories, attendance declined and problem behaviors in school increased. One implication of this finding is that school personnel might learn to become aware of changing patterns of behavior in young women who had previously been regarded as progressing satisfactorily. Another implication is that underachievement in adolescent women may indicate something other than an educational problem if it represents a change rather than an enduring issue. Adolescence brings hormonal changes and new kinds of significant relationships which can contribute to emotional ups and downs, including depression. These factors could negatively impact school performance (Ehrenberg, Cox, & Koopman, 1991). Involvement with a peer group that does not value academic performance could also result in a decline in school performance (Downs & Rose, 1991). It is necessary to assess for these factors when evaluating the educational status of any student and planning for appropriate interventions. Gang involvement would require different interventions than would a learning disability, for example. Perhaps, a closer examination of school records together with the use of the Gang Involvement Risk Index would enable school personnel to determine whether a young woman has some chronic educational problems requiring an educational intervention, or whether she is displaying a change in school behavior indicative of possible involvement in gangs.

Many prevention and intervention programs for at-risk and gang-involved youth have been developed on the premise that children become involved in delinquent behaviors and gangs because they have nothing else to do, are seeking companionship, or a sense of belonging. According to this study, gang-involved adolescent women were less likely than other young women to have been involved in community activities. Many factors could have contributed to this finding. It makes sense to view these young women as lacking role models for community involvement given the at-risk situations of their parents. The young women may also have lacked financial resources or opportunities to participate in such activities, or such participation may not have been valued by their families. It seems important to consider these factors as well as the specific needs and motivations of gang-involved young women when developing intervention programs because females may have very different motivations than males for gang involvement , e.g., need for affiliation, power, respect, fun, excitement, and money (Ribisl & Davidson, 1993). Accordingly, intervention strategies should be customized to meet the needs of female gang members. Boys and Girls Clubs is one of the few organizations which has targeted young women as well as young men to receive a wide array of outreach services (Lovell & Pope, 1993). They often provide recreational, social, educational, and even employment opportunities. However, these opportunities, while possibly meeting the needs of many young people, may not be specific enough to address the needs of young women whose motivations for gang involvement are more complex, and who may have to consider family factors prior to participating.

The results of this study clearly indicate that friendship patterns and social-structural considerations such as the family are related to gang involvement of adolescent women. The study further shows that self-esteem of gang-involved adolescent women is lower than that of either at-risk or not-gang-involved young women. They do not, however, suggest a causal relationship, and would have to be incorporated with other data in order to determine a sequence of occurrence.

Efficacy was lower for both gang-involved and at-risk adolescent women than for not-gang-involved young women, suggesting that they feel a high degree of external control over their lives. As with self-esteem, it is difficult to know whether the lack of efficacy preceded or followed the involvement in gangs.

Family demographic and family relationship factors need to be considered when examining the issues of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Parents who are unable or unwilling to foster and maintain their daughters' self-esteem during critical developmental stages will likely have daughters with low self-esteem. When relationships are problematic and negative in quality, the daughters will probably feel mistreated, and

consequently experience lowered self-esteem. Power struggles between parents and children can contribute to a lack of sense efficacy for the children. An interesting consideration at this point is that the gang-involved adolescent women who were subjects for this study included a large percentage who resembled, by self-report and court records, the more independent or entrepreneurial female gang members described by Taylor (1990), than they did the affiliates or girlfriends of male gang members described by other researchers (Horowitz, 1983; Jankowski, 1991). They reported seeking opportunities to engage in gang activities and behaviors, and did not feel influenced by male gang members. They often stated that they were allowed to do whatever they wanted, that the choices were theirs. Several pointed out that this was in contrast to their situation at home or at school. Despite their outward appearance of power, the data indicate that these young women still perceived themselves as ineffectual and lacking in esteem.

The last area examined was the extent of contact adolescent women in the study may have had with gang members. Both the gang-involved and at-risk adolescent women reported knowing gang members and having family members who were in a gang. The gang-involved group reported many more friendships with gang members than did the adolescent women in the other groups. They were also more likely to have been recruited. This is consistent with the conclusions of Bowker and Klein (1983) about friendship patterns and opportunity, but does not sufficiently explain why some adolescent women become involved in gangs while others, given the same opportunities and invitations to participate, do not.

It seems after examining both the research and the data that each of the risk factors viewed in isolation is insufficient to explain gang involvement. A more complex solution is needed to the question of why adolescent women join gangs. An interactive process which combines several of the variables and arrives at a risk index for involvement increases the accuracy of identifying young women at risk for gang involvement. Such a tool can help to identify young women who are at risk for becoming involved in gangs. Agencies can assess young women using this tool and provide specialized programming and interventions for those who are at high risk for gang involvement.

In addition to the data which was analyzed in response to the research questions, a considerable amount of anecdotal and collaborative data was gathered about the gang-involved young women. One interesting issue which emerged from this data was that at least sixty-five percent of the parents of the gang-involved adolescent women had a history of substance abuse. Eighty-five percent of the young women, themselves, had early use of illegal substances and many had been in drug and alcohol treatment programs. Similar data was not obtained for the other groups in the study because items pertaining to drug and alcohol use of subjects or parents were not included in the interview instrument due to ethical considerations. This seems to be an area that warrants further study.An interesting finding of this study is that of the sixty young women who were asked why females join gangs, none responded that boyfriends or relationships with males was the reason. The most popular responses were, " to have friends" or "be with friends," "to have power or respect," or because of "family problems" or "bad home life." Table 10 shows how the young women in each of the groups responded to the question, "Why do young women join gangs?"

A main task for researchers is to increase the awareness of parents, schools, law enforcement officials, service providers, and communities about the problem of female involvement in gangs. The problem is increasing both in size and severity and there are currently no programs designed specifically to meet the needs of gang-involved adolescent women which have incorporated available knowledge into program planning while promoting additional research that can lead to enhanced services. One of the best sources of data is the young women themselves. They would like to tell researchers what their issues are and what they need.

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Table 1

Dependent Variables, Descriptive Statistics, and ANOVA Main Group Effects

Variable by Category	Group Effect			Group Means		
	Mean	SD	F-Ratio	GI[a]	AR[b]	NG[c]
FAMILY DEMOGRAPHICS						
Maternal Education	2.407	.790	15.108***	1.706	2.778	2.684
Paternal Education	2.196	.749	4.154*	1.824	2.273	2.500
Subject Employed	1.300	.462	1.676	1.350	1.150	1.400
Number in Household	4.345	1.250	.875	4.000	4.526	4.450
Family Type	1.660	.479	2.470	1.786	1.765	1.474
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS						
Is Family OK	1.850	.360	1.163	1.750	1.900	1.900
Relationship w/Mother	3.696	.630	1.792	3.529	3.632	3.900
Relationship w/Father	3.114	1.183	6.698**	2.533	2.857	3.923
Mistreated at Home	1.767	.427	17.157***	1.400	1.950	1.950
Can Talk to Parent	1.797	.406	2.155	1.650	1.842	1.900
Treated Fairly at Home	1.833	.376	.144	1.800	1.850	1.850
Is Father Strict	.931	.998	.651	1.133	.800	.667
SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT						
Grade Point Average	2.353	.962	7.372**	1.952	2.053	2.976
Reading Score	222.362	13.672	9.456***	222.200	214.700	231.471
Math Score	226.587	17.245	10.994***	224.200	217.300	239.688
SCHOOL RISK						
Schools Attended	5.036	2.215	3.479*	6.056	4.850	4.222
Number of Absences	19.691	10.959	2.154	23.944	18.150	17.000
Behavior Referral	2.200	4.345	4.055*	4.500	3.500	.000
Suspensions	.421	1.004	2.657	.667	.737	.000
Likes School	1.857	.353	2.167	1.722	1.889	1.950
Special Education	1.250	.437	.256	1.250	1.300	1.200
Remedial Program	1.183	.390	3.704*	1.250	1.300	1.000
Alternative Program	1.333	.475	28.216***	1.800	1.150	1.050
Club Member	1.733	1.191	2.213	1.300	2.050	1.850
ACTIVITIES						
Played Sports	1.729	.448	.250	1.789	1.700	1.700
Attends Church	1.483	.504	2.111	1.300	1.600	1.550
Community Activity	.717	.804	2.637	.400	.800	.950
EFFICACY AND SELF ESTEEM						
Efficacy Score	13.033	3.723	8.049***	11.300	12.400	15.400
Esteem Score	18.133	4.284	4.432*	20.300	17.400	16.700
LEVEL OF GANG CONTACT						
Knows Gang Members	1.150	.360	5.835**	1.000	1.100	1.350
Family Member in Gang	1.633	.486	3.785*	1.600	1.450	1.850
Friends in Gang	1.317	.469	11.075***	1.000	1.350	1.600
Pressured to Join	1.850	.360	2.871	1.700	1.900	1.950
Recruited to Join	1.617	.490	12.959***	1.250	1.700	1.900

[a] [b] [c]

Note. GI = Gang-involved. AR = At-risk. NG = Not-gang-involved.
*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

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Table 2

Planned Group Comparisons on Family Demographics Variables

	Groups Compared					
	GI[a] vs NG[b]		AR[c] vs NG		GI vs AR	
Variable	**F**	**p**	**F**	**p**	**F**	**p**
Maternal Education	21.111	.000	.199	.657	24.694	.000
Paternal Education	8.133	.007	.717	.402	2.739	.105
Subject Employed	.120	.731	2.994	.089	1.916	.172
Number in Household	1.146	.289	.036	.850	1.532	.221
Family Type	3.633	.063	3.518	.067	.016	.901

Note. GI[a] = Gang-involved. NG[b] = Not-gang-involved. AR[c] = At-risk.

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Table 3

Planned Group Comparisons on Family Relationship Variables

	Groups Compared					
	GI[a] vs NG[b]		AR[c] vs NG		GI vs AR	
Variable	**F**	**p**	**F**	**p**	**F**	**p**
Is Family OK	1.745	.192	.000	1.000	1.745	.192
Relationship w/Mother	3.270	.076	1.819	.183	.243	.624
Relationship w/Father	12.843	.001	4.936	.033	.478	.494
Mistreated at Home	25.735	.000	.000	1.000	25.735	.000
Can Talk to Parent	3.943	.052	.206	.652	2.269	.138
Treated Fairly	.172	.680	.000	1.000	.172	.680
Is Father Strict	1.200	.283	.056	.815	.408	.528

Note. [a]GI = Gang-involved. [b]NG = Not-gang-involved. [c]AR = At-risk.

Table 4

Planned Group Comparisons on School Achievement Variables

Variable	Groups Compared: GI[a] vs NG[b]		AR[c] vs NG		GI vs AR	
	F	p	F	p	F	p
Grade Point Average	10.726	.002	10.944	.002	.108	.744
Reading Score	3.959	.053	18.909	.000	2.744	.105
Math Score	7.168	.010	21.634	.000	1.541	.221

Note. [a] GI = Gang-involved. [b] NG = Not-gang-involved. [c] AR = At-risk.

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Table 5

Planned Group Comparisons on School Risk Variables

	Groups Compared					
	GI[a] vs NG[b]		AR[c] vs NG		GI vs AR	
Variable	**F**	**p**	**F**	**p**	**F**	**p**
Schools Attended	6.719	.012	.829	.367	3.058	.086
Number of Absences	3.661	.061	.106	.747	2.762	.103
Behavior Referrals	3.970	.054	6.670	.014	.204	.654
Suspensions	1.215	.278	5.102	.030	.014	.907
Likes School	4.110	.048	.296	.589	2.090	.154
Special Education	.128	.722	.511	.478	.128	.722
Remedial Program	4.481	.039	6.453	.014	.179	.674
Alternative Program	47.854	.000	.851	.360	35.944	.000
Club Member	2.219	.142	.293	.590	4.126	.047

Note. [a]GI = Gang-involved. [b]NG = Not-gang-involved. [c]AR = At-risk.

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Table 6

Planned Group Comparisons on Activities Variables

	Groups Compared					
	GI[a] vs NG[b]		AR[c] vs NG		GI vs AR	
Variable	**F**	**p**	**F**	**p**	**F**	**p**
Played Sports	.378	.541	.000	1.000	.378	.541
Attends Church	2.554	.116	.102	.750	3.677	.060
Community Activity	4.933	.030	.367	.547	2.609	.112

Note. GI[a] = Gang-involved. NG[b] = Not-gang-involved. AR[c] = At-risk.

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Table 7

Planned Group Comparisons on Efficacy and Self-Esteem Variables

	Groups Compared					
	GI[a] vs NG[b]		AR[c] vs NG		GI vs AR	
Variable	**F**	**p**	**F**	**p**	**F**	**p**
Efficacy Score	15.023	.000	8.043	.006	1.081	.308
Esteem Score	7.882	.007	.298	.587	5.115	.028

Note. GI[a] = Gang-involved. NG[b] = Not-gang-involved. AR[c] = At-risk.

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Table 8

Planned Group Comparisons on Gang Contact Variables

Variable	Groups Compared: GI[a] vs NG[b] F	p	AR[c] vs NG F	p	GI vs AR F	p
Knows Gang Members	10.996	.002	5.610	.021	.898	.347
Family Member in Gang	2.896	.094	7.415	.009	1.043	.312
Friends in Gang	21.947	.000	3.810	.056	7.468	.008
Pressured to Join Gang	5.126	.027	.205	.652	3.281	.075
Recruited to Join Gang	24.700	.000	2.338	.132	11.838	.001

Note. [a] GI = Gang-involved. [b] NG = Not-gang-involved. [c] AR = At-risk.

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Table 9

Gang Involvement Risk Index

High Risk Factors

1. Mother has less than high school education.

2. Adolescent woman has poor relationship with father or father is absent.

3. Adolescent woman feels mistreated at home.

4. Adolescent woman lacks sense of efficacy as measured by score of 12 or lower on Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale.

5. Adolescent woman has low self-esteem as measured by score of 17 or higher on Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

6. Adolescent woman has friends who are gang involved.

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Table 10

Number and Type of Response to "Why Do Females Join Gangs?"

Type of Response	Group GI[a]	AR[b]	NG[c]
Affiliation, Friends	14	11	17
Power, Respect	11	9	3
Safety	5	1	4
Excitement, Fun	6	2	4
Drugs	5	0	1
Money	4	1	0
Family Problems	8	7	13

Note. [a] GI = Gang-involved. [b] AR = At-risk. [c] NG = Not-gang-involved.

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